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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7435th meeting
Tuesday, 28 April 2015, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Kawar	(Jordan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2015/246)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2015/246)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/285, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/246, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara.

The Council is ready to proceed to a vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2218 (2015).

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation takes the floor to explain its vote or resolution 2218 (2015), which the Security Council has just adopted.

We would like to underscore Malaysia's full support for the efforts of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), as well as those of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, towards finding a solution to the question of Western Sahara. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2016. In that regard, we call for the parties to the dispute to continue negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General, in a constructive manner, with a view to achieving a mutually acceptable political solution to all, as well as ensuring an improvement in the well-being of the people of Western Sahara.

We remain hopeful that, in future, a more transparent and inclusive consultation process that takes into account the views of all Council members could be undertaken. That would certainly contribute immensely to our collective efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Permanent Mission of the United States for having prepared the draft of resolution 2218 (2015), concerning Western Sahara. France voted in favour of the resolution, which it also sponsored, as it appropriately addresses the whole host of aspects pertaining to the question of Western Sahara. It provides the necessary impetus to the political process. It renews for a year the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). And, lastly, it refers to the human dimension of the situation in the territory.

This resolution, which we adopted unanimously, provides the necessary momentum to the political situation. The text clearly indicates that the consolidation of the status quo is not acceptable, and that the parties must engage with more resolve and demonstrate greater political will, realism and spirit of compromise in order to advance towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

Resolving the question of Western Sahara is necessary to respond to the expectations of the population of the territory, to achieve the political and economic integration of the Maghreb and to respond to the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, where we must together overcome the challenge posed by the heightened threat of terrorism.

The historic differences can be resolved. The United Nations has a responsibility to help the parties to move ahead in the negotiations. In that regard, we reiterate our full support for the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Christopher Ross, whose shuttle diplomacy is necessary to facilitate dialogue and bring the positions closer together. Moreover, France believes that the autonomy plan presented by Morocco to the

Secretary-General on 7 April is a serious and credible basis for a negotiated solution.

This resolution renews MINURSO's mandate. France supports the role of MINURSO and of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ms. Kim Bolduc, with whom the parties should continue their full cooperation. For more than 20 years, MINURSO has been making a contribution to maintaining calm in a region experiencing numerous challenges. It has done so by carrying out the three aspects of its mandate, namely, monitoring the ceasefire, contributing to de-mining activities and supporting confidence-building measures, especially the family visit programme, to which the resolution refers. In that connection, we regret the suspension of the programme, which was put in place by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and which provided relief to refugee families while maintaining channels for dialogue. We hope that the programme will resume without delay.

Lastly, the resolution appropriately addresses the human aspect of the issue of Western Sahara. We urge the parties to continue their efforts to strengthen and promote human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf refugee camps. As the resolution underscores, Morocco has taken steps to strengthen its National Council on Human Rights commissions operating in Dakhla and Laayoune, as well as its interaction with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We welcome those initiatives and the other structural reforms carried out by Morocco — such as its ratification of the additional protocol to the Convention against Torture and its reform of the law on military tribunals — which benefit the population of Western Sahara. The situation also recalls that the very precarious situation of the Saharaoui population in the Tindouf camps must not be forgotten. In that connection, it calls for further efforts to be made in order to register the refugees in the camps. This is in the general direction of the goal of maintaining the necessary provision of international humanitarian assistance in the camps.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): The United States supports the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2218 (2015), which renews for another year the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). MINURSO is indispensable in its role of supporting stability and security in Western Sahara, as it has for the past 24 years. The United States believes that the United Nations has the legitimacy and impartiality necessary to facilitate a lasting political solution to this conflict.

The United States is hopeful that the adoption of this resolution will encourage the parties to demonstrate their serious and genuine commitment to the United Nations-led political process to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and to engage in negotiations as soon as possible. We look forward to both sides bringing forward new ideas to that dialogue.

We witnessed several developments of concern this past year: stalled family visits, dwindling humanitarian assistance and rising tensions inside Saharaoui refugee camps, as well as greater security concerns in the region, which illustrate that the status quo is clearly untenable. Over the past year, the United Nations also suffered a significant and regrettable loss of diplomatic engagement. The loss of valuable time and diplomatic engagement must not be repeated.

The United States is determined to see that parties make significant progress towards a mutual political solution and to improve the human rights situation throughout the next year. We encourage the resumption of family reunification visits, which underscore the vary real human dimension to this conflict. We also look forward to the United Nations briefings in October, and we hope we will hear of greater progress at that time.

We call upon the parties to demonstrate their resolve in implementing all the elements of this resolution, including facilitating full access for MINURSO staff to all interlocutors. We further remind the parties of the ongoing need for the Council to receive reports from the United Nations on the situation on the ground in Western Sahara and in the refugee camps near Tindouf. We encourage the parties to continue to cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its visits to the region, as well as to continue to promote and protect human rights in both areas.

The United States remains committed to the United Nations efforts for Western Sahara, including those led by Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General Christopher Ross, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kim Bolduc and the Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United Nations has our unwavering support for its efforts to achieve a political solution.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since 1991, the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has been essential, among other things, in fulfilment of its mandate, maintaining the ceasefire agreed by the parties. Spain therefore welcomes today's extension of MINURSO's mandate based on the text put forward by the Group of Friends of Western Sahara. We appreciate the work of the United States in the course of drafting the resolution.

MINURSO should continue its work because the presence of the United Nations in Western Sahara and the refugee camps is, as the Secretary-General says in his report,

> "relevant to ensur[ing] the parties' observation of the ceasefire and as a visible representation of the international community's commitment to achieving a resolution to the conflict" (*S/2015/246, para. 75*).

As the resolution just adopted notes, it is important that the parties

> "cooperate fully with the operations of MINURSO, including its free interaction with all interlocutors, and to take the necessary steps to ensure the security of as well as unhindered movement and immediate access for the United Nations and associated personnel in carrying out their mandate, in conformity with existing agreements" (*resolution 2218 (2015), para. 3*).

Spain wishes to emphasize that, as a draft version of the resolution stated before being strengthened for the final text just adopted, the support of the Security Council for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and his Special Representative is unqualified, and that, as an innovation, Member States are called on to continue making voluntary contributions in support of the food programmes to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the refugees are adequately addressed. For Spain, the improvement of the situation of refugees is a priority and we will therefore do everything in our power to respond to this appeal. We encourage others to do the same. This reinforced support for the Personal Envoy should serve to reaffirm the central role of the United Nations and facilitate a renewed effort to push for a solution to the conflict.

Spain believes that once the resolution has been adopted, the priority is to advance the political process. The efforts of the international community must focus on helping the parties — Morocco and the Frente Polisario — to agree on a political, just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the free determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. This solution, for which the political will of the parties is necessary, would put an end to a conflict that has lasted too many years and would contribute to the stability of the region.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2218 (2015), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), as we are convinced of its important role in the supervision of the ceasefire, reducing the threat of unexploded mines and ordnance and promoting measures to build confidence between the parties in order to achieve the holding of the referendum, which is its principal mandate under resolution 690 (1991).

In supporting the management, facilitation and efforts of the Secretary-General to bring about an agreement between the parties, MINURSO should continue to extend its cooperation to a range of assistance programmes aimed at addressing the plight of Sahrawi families that are spread out and separated, and bring new life into direct negotiations between the Frente Polisario and Morocco.

However, we wish to express certain concerns about the procedure used in the drafting of the resolution just adopted. A text was presented to us that had been previously agreed by the Group of Friends of Western Sahara which did not address the legitimate concerns and proposals that were made by numerous countries that are interested in this specific issue, Venezuela among them. These proposals were aimed at strengthening the role of MINURSO in the promotion and protection of human rights of the population of Western Sahara, bearing in mind the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2015/246) and the features of all United Nations missions. It is therefore necessary that future negotiation processes

on the matter before us see an improvement in working methods with the aim of helping to promote a broad, inclusive and transparent discussion.

In the context of the proposals made, the amendment that sought to increase the frequency with which the Security Council reviews the topic was not adopted. Another amendment was aimed at reaffirming the responsibilities of the Council in facilitating a fair and lasting solution to the situation in Western Sahara through the holding of a referendum on self-determination that would allow for completion of the unfinished process of decolonization, a situation that has lasted for more than four decades. It is essential that we ensure the implementation of resolution 690 (1991), which provided for the holding of the referendum. We are concerned that, without a referendum, the process of colonizing Western Sahara will continue, including the deterioration of human rights of the Sahrawi people and the illegal exploitation of their natural resources — all of which is to the detriment of stability and peace in the region.

Furthermore, we regret that the consultations held on this topic were not preceded by an open meeting in which we could ensure the participation of the Special Envoy of the African Union for Western Sahara, former President Joaquim Chissano, in the light of the request made by that regional organization, which, together with the United Nations, is facilitating the process of negotiation between the parties. It is paradoxical that a strategic United Nations ally in efforts to find solutions to conflicts affecting peace and security on the African continent would be excluded from discussions in this body. We hope that this Council can correct this omission in the near term.

To conclude, we reaffirm the Council's responsibility in working with resolve towards a fair and lasting solution to the colonial situation endured by the Sahrawi people through the fulfilment of their right to self-determination, including the option of independence, pursuant to international law, and in particular the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 2218 (2015). In co-sponsoring it, we wish to reiterate our full support for the Secretary-General, Special Representative Bolduc and Ambassador Ross. We appreciate their efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Despite the efforts of Ambassador Ross, it is clear that no progress has been made on the substance of the dispute. This stalemate is regrettable and has implications for the stability and security of the Maghreb region. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/246) notes, there is a growing threat from criminal and extremist activities in the regions adjacent to the territory, and growing frustrations among Saharan youth and Polisario military only compound our concern.

Forty years after the start of this conflict, it is clear that the status quo is simply not sustainable. During Ambassador Ross' recent trip to the region, all interlocutors committed to cooperating fully with the United Nations and to finding a solution as soon as possible. We welcome this pledge, but the parties must match their words with actions and do everything they can to honour their commitment and end the stalemate.

It is clear that the political future of Western Sahara will be determined only by renewed engagements on the part of the parties. They will continue to have the support of the Security Council and the international community in their efforts. But unless political will can be found by the parties, we will be no closer to the realization of a political solution. It is high time for that to change.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): The Security Council has just adopted resolution 2218 (2015), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. I am speaking in explanation of vote in my capacity as coordinator of the African State Members of the Security Council, that is, Angola, Chad and Nigeria, and taking into account our adopted position, recommended to us by the African Union Peace and Security Council, with a view to playing a more active and constructive role in the search for solutions to the issue of Western Sahara.

The three African Member States of the Security Council voted in favour of today's resolution in the conviction that first, the Security Council is really committed to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara; secondly, that it is committed to ending the current impasse in efforts to achieve progress towards a political solution; thirdly, that it recognizes that achieving a political solution would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region; and, fourthly,

that it encourages the parties to demonstrate greater political will in their efforts to find a way to continue the negotiation process and recognizes that consolidation of the status quo is unacceptable, as others have also said this morning.

In that context, we would like to specifically encourage the parties to abide by the resolution's provisions, take them into full account and ensure that tangible progress is achieved by holding negotiations without further delay on a referendum on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and hopes that the Mission will continue to play a constructive role in stabilizing the situation in Western Sahara and assisting in the implementation of confidence-building measures.

China's position on the issue of Western Sahara has been consistent and remains unchanged. Based on that, we voted in favour of resolution 2218 (2015), adopted by the Security Council this morning. We know that some Council members have concerns about the resolution. When the members of the Council were holding consultations on the draft resolution, more time should have been allowed for that, and more patience should have been shown so as to enable us to listen more extensively to the various opinions. Allowing more adequate time for consultations would have enabled us to seek the greatest possible consensus and obtain the widest possible support.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Jordan.

I would first like to thank Mr. Ross and Ms. Bolduc for their efforts. Jordan voted in favour of resolution 2218 (2015), and we believe that, if it is fully implemented by the parties concerned, it can lead to a lasting solution to the issue of Western Sahara, since it includes all the elements necessary to enable that goal to be achieved.

We would like to emphasize the importance of cooperation by the parties with the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, and with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, in order to enable it to fulfil its aims. Those include enforcing the ceasefire and conducting de-mining, as well as strengthening confidence-building measures. The United Nations, as the only organization recognized by both parties, remains the only body capable of bringing together the parties' positions in order to achieve a just and lasting solution to the issue, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and on respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It should also take into account the concerns of the people of Western Sahara.

We reaffirm that Morocco's proposal on self-determination is a serious one, and we welcome its efforts to make concrete improvements in the human-rights situation in Western Sahara.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.